

Paulo Freire, Eduardo Frei, Literacy Training and the Politics of Consciousness Raising in Chile, 1964 to 1970*

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Abstract. This article examines the politics of literacy during the administration of Chilean President Eduardo Frei. Literacy training was an essential part of Christian Democratic efforts to promote agrarian reform and rural unionisation and incorporate the peasantry into the Chilean political system. Paulo Freire, working for the ministries of agriculture and education, was able to employ his innovative ‘consciousness raising’ techniques throughout Chile. In practice, the campaign often blurred the line between creating a critical consciousness and creating a Christian Democratic consciousness, while Freire himself became caught up in political struggles within the administration over the extent and pace of reform.

Illiteracy in the Latin America of the 1960s became a major issue with implications for the distribution of power in urbanising societies. The Cuban Revolution claimed to have reduced the number of people who could not read and write from 23 per cent to less than four per cent through the voluntary efforts of adults and secondary school students.¹ Responding to this challenge from the Cuban government, the US-sponsored Alliance for Progress, as part of its plan to modernise Latin America and promote social reform in order to prevent revolution, promised to end illiteracy in the region by 1970. Within that Cold War context, as well as within the general post-war drive for social and economic development, Paulo Freire had developed new techniques for training adults to read and write. These would not reach their

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¹ See Theodore McDonald, *Making a New People: Education in Revolutionary Cuba* (Vancouver, 1985), particularly pp. 17–19, 47 and 52–72, and Marvin Leiner, ‘The 1961 National Cuban Literacy Campaign,’ in Robert F. Arnove and Harvey J. Graff (eds.), *National Literacy Campaigns: Historical and Comparative Perspectives* (New York, 1987), pp. 173–96.

fullest development in his native Brazil, where the military and other elements in society considered them subversive of the status quo, but in Chile, where the administration of Eduardo Frei made popular education part of the larger Christian Democratic state project of promoting land reform and the enlargement of what we now call civil society. Central to Frei's vision was a plan to eradicate illiteracy.² The Frei administration sought both to liberate and to control, and at its best and worst, it exemplified the promise and the contradictions of 1960s reformism. Freire, Frei, and others engaged in the process of encouraging social transformation wanted to transform the consciousness of the Chilean *campesinos*. Given the strengths and weaknesses of the Chilean social and political system, this created the potential both for furthering a paternalistic relationship between the government and the governed and for promoting changes that went beyond the boundaries of the permissible. Moreover, it awakened the consciousness of more than those it specifically targeted, radicalising, at times, the very state agents who took part in the programme of social transformation while inspiring more conservative elements in Chilean society to regroup and challenge the Christian Democrats in the 1970 presidential election.

Freire's Chilean experience, 1964–69

I offer in this article a larger understanding of the relationship between literacy training and the broader process of social transformation, and place it within the context of the tensions within the Christian Democratic party and in Chilean society as a whole regarding the direction and the pace of reform. Moreover, I examine the question of the degree to which 'consciousness' was being changed, and whose consciousness was being changed, not only because of the literacy training programmes but also because of larger social and political dynamics involved.³

Paulo Freire's experience in Chile in adult literacy education from 1964 to 1969 represent the most fruitful period in an energetic and creative life. As important as Freire's previous work in Brazil had been, it was during his

² Eduardo Frei, 'Primer Mensaje del Presidente de la República de Chile,' 21 May 1965, p. 10.

³ One of the few significant attempts to view Freire's experience in Chile historically is Guillermo Williamson Castro, *Paulo Freire: educador para una nueva civilización* (Temuco, Chile, 1999). The literature on the development of his ideas in Brazil is much richer. See Celso de Rui Beisiegel, *Estado e educação popular (um estudo sobre a educação de adultos)* (São Paulo, 1974) and *Política e educação popular (a teoria e a prática de Paulo Freire no Brasil)* (São Paulo, 1982); Vanilda Pereira Paiva, *Paulo Freire e o nacionalismo desenvolvimentista* (Rio de Janeiro, 1980) and *Educação popular e educação de adultos* 4th Edition (São Paulo, 1987). A good introduction to Chilean Christian Democracy can be found in David Lehmann, *Democracy and Development in Latin America: Economics, Politics and Religion in the Post-War Period* (Philadelphia, 1990), pp. 104–8.

Chilean exile that he became a figure of importance not only in Latin America, but in what was then called the Third World as a whole. When this period of his life ended, he was receiving invitations from Harvard University and the World Council of Churches and would be active on the international stage. To understand how Freire became so central to international debates over the importance of literacy in social transformation, one must examine him and his work within the context of the larger Christian Democratic reformist project, which he aided and of which he became critical. The Frei administration not only had significant achievements to its credit but also created promising yet problematic political dynamics that would be exacerbated during Salvador Allende's shortened term in office. To understand Freire's role within the administration, one has to look closely at his allies, most particularly Jacques Chonchol, Freire's boss in the Ministry of Agriculture's Instituto del Desarrollo Agropecuario (INDAP), and the much less known Waldemar Cortés Carabantes, who was in charge of the education ministry's adult literacy campaign.

Freire arrived in Chile in November 1964, having been imprisoned by the newly established military dictatorship of Brazil before being given a temporary refuge in October in Bolivia. The Bolivian government of Víctor Paz Estenssoro had offered to employ him, but the overthrow of that government soon after his arrival, as well as Freire's own difficulties in adjusting to the country's high altitudes, combined to make his stay there untenable. Fortunately for him, the influx of Brazilians into Chile which had begun following the overthrow of the government of João Goulart in late March created employment opportunities for him as well. Paulo de Tarso Santos, Goulart's former minister of education, was a member of the small Brazilian Christian Democratic party and therefore had political ties to members of the new Frei administration, inaugurated in the same month that Freire arrived. The poet Thiago de Melo, who had been Goulart's cultural attaché in Chile, and the agronomist Steban Strauss were friends of Chonchol, who became Freire's chief ally within the administration. Within days of his arrival in his new country, Freire was already working for Chonchol. Years later, Freire remembered the feelings of 'euphoria' that accompanied the 'rise of the Christian Democratic party to power', the openness with which he and other Brazilians were received, and the hopes the reformist government's 'Revolution in Liberty' represented of a 'Third Way' in Latin American politics.⁴ Freire had developed his techniques of mass literacy training in the impoverished Brazilian northeast and had only just begun to work on a national scale when his work was interrupted by

⁴ Paulo Freire and Sergio Guimarães, *Aprendendo com a Própria História*, vol. 1 (Rio de Janeiro, 1987), pp. 76–7, 80 and 85.

the coup. He had left behind a country with a historically weak democratic tradition in which a paternalistic populism represented the dominant, and certainly not unproblematic, progressive political trend. He was now operating in a country in which a much more inclusive and politicised political system had operated for decades, and in which traditional parties of the left were strong. The Freire of this period eschewed partisan identifications. He was now employed by an administration which was criticised by many on the left as being 'bourgeois' and even 'rightist'.⁵ Conservatives, for their part, who had voted for Frei out of a perceived necessity (to prevent the election of Allende), would soon view Frei's programmes as dangerous, not least because of the attempt to transform social relations in the countryside, a task to which Freire himself would dedicate his years in Chile. The United States, furthermore, backed the Frei administration wholeheartedly during the early years, while it had sought to undermine the majority of the people Freire had worked with in Brazil on city, state, and national levels. No South American country received more aid per capita from the United States during the 1960s; if the Alliance for Progress's plan to prevent revolution by promoting reform still meant anything after the death of John F. Kennedy, it was in Chile under Frei.⁶

Freire was involved with a number of different governmental organisations almost from the beginning. Chonchol offered him work with INDAP's Social Development Division. INDAP, which had been focused on technical and financial aid in the agricultural sector during the previous administration of conservative president Jorge Alessandri, was now more interested in helping *campesinos* organise. For INDAP Freire gave lectures and engaged in discussions and planning sessions regarding ways and means to

⁵ For a critique of the Frei administration from the left, see, for example, Ian Roxborough, Philip O'Brien and Jackie Roddick, *Chile: The State and Revolution* (New York, 1977), pp. 40–7 and 49–50. Barbara Stallings describes the Christian Democrats as 'the only real multi-class party in Chile'. See her *Class Conflict and Economic Development in Chile, 1958–1973* (Stanford, 1978), pp. 55 and 61–2. The bourgeoisie was represented by modern industrialists and the 'petty bourgeois intelligentsia'. Members of the popular classes were 'real allies' in the 'centrist alliance'. David Lehmann, however, refers to a 'bourgeois leadership, a middle class membership and a working class and peasant clientele'. See his 'Political Incorporation versus Political Instability: The Case of the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1965–70,' *Journal of Development Studies*, vol. 7, no. 4 (July 1971), p. 374.

⁶ Regarding US support for the Frei administration, see 'Memorandum of Conversation: Mr. Mann's Second Meeting with the Mission of President-Elect Eduardo Frei, 17 Oct. 1964,' p. 2 in Record Group (hereafter RG) 84, Box 144, American Embassy Santiago, National Archives (hereafter NA); Dungan, 'The Government and the PDC: The Gap between Ideology and Reality,' 12 July 1967, in RG 84, Box 176, American Embassy, Santiago. Regarding US policies in Brazil, see Stephen G. Rabe, *The Most Dangerous Area in the World: John F. Kennedy Confronts Communist Revolution in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, 1999), pp. 63–71. For policies in Chile, see pp. 109–16 and William F. Sater, *Chile and the United States: Empires in Conflict* (Athens, GA, 1990), pp. 139–58.

accomplish this end. Freire eventually also worked with the *Corporación de Reforma Agraria* (CORA), as well, providing instruction in literacy training techniques for those working with *campesinos* on expropriated properties administered by the agency called *asentamientos* or settlements.⁷ In his four-and-a-half years in Chile, he travelled the length of Chile, helping organise literacy training and broader popular education programmes. In Chile, adult literacy training became closely linked to the broader ‘social and economic changes in the countryside’ that Frei envisioned, and to the need to ‘obtain the active and creative incorporation [of *campesinos*] into the community’ and their ‘conscious participation in the process of development’.⁸ Frei and his state project envisioned the transformation of Chilean society and politics. If it had the strengths and weaknesses of any state-directed project, it also was imbued with a profoundly Catholic humanism.⁹

Popular organisation and agrarian reform

One of the major weaknesses of Chilean democracy in 1964, according to Frei and his allies, was the lack of incorporation of the Chilean peasantry into the larger political process. Unlike many Latin American countries, Chile was already primarily urban (more than seventy per cent of the population by the 1960s) and had been since the 1940s, and its politics reflected that fact. A relatively inclusive political system had been built in part by explicitly excluding the peasantry, despite frequent attempts by *campesinos* to organise rural unions in the period prior to the rise of a reformist Catholic Church in Chile.¹⁰ One of Eduardo Frei’s central concerns as president was to change the marginal status of the roughly twenty per cent of the population that belonged to the peasantry. Beginning with the introduction of the secret ballot in 1958, the rural population had become more politically active than ever before. The Christian Democrats hoped to harness the potential of this part of the electorate by enacting reforms that appealed to them. Having been elected with the support of 55 per cent of those who voted in the 4 September 1964 election, Frei argued that there was a need to create a ‘new political regime’ that would be ‘capable of surmounting the obstacles that inhibit economic development and the realisation of social

⁷ Williamson, *Paulo Freire*, pp. 39 and 87–8.

⁸ Frei, ‘Mensaje 1968,’ p. 259 and ‘Mensaje 1970,’ p. 30; Williamson, *Paulo Freire*, p. 75. Regarding the changing political dynamics in Chile, see Robert R. Kaufman, *The Politics of Land Reform in Chile, 1950–1970: Public Policy, Political Institutions, and Social Change* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 9–10, 21–2, 29–30 and 68–9.

⁹ See James C. Scott’s criticism of state-directed development in *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, 1998), particularly pp. 4–5 and 93–102.

¹⁰ Loveman, *Struggles in the Countryside*, particularly pp. 144–5, 152–6 and 170–5.

justice without sacrificing liberty'. In congressional elections in the following March, his party gained control of the lower house of Congress, but it was never able to control the Senate. Frei's vision of a transformed Chile included the active promotion of the expansion of participation in the political process and in social and economic life. The key to political and social development, according to Frei, was organisation. To this end, he argued for the general need for what he called '*promoción popular*'. Frei wanted to encourage the creation of political and social organisations of a wide variety of types. As he would later argue, 'an organised people, with a rising cultural level, which enjoys an expanding access to information and the free and secret exercise of suffrage, is a people that demands that its voice be heard and is respected in the dialogue of power'. Frei lamented the fact that in 1965 only ten per cent of wage workers belonged to unions. There were too few 'structures which authentically represent the aspirations' of workers, *campesinos*, and *pobladores* in urban slums. The creation of 'mothers' centres' also became an important concern of the Frei administration; they became the 'largest and most influential women's organisations in both rural and urban Chile'.¹¹ Frei argued that people needed to be '**subjects** and not **objects** of their liberation' (emphasis in the original). But the national government also had to be able to respond positively to popular organisations and provide them with the resources they needed to thrive. Frei was aware of the dangers implicit in such an approach; popular promotion could easily degenerate into 'paternalism, sectarianism, and statism'. Critics of the programme argued that the government was simply creating new clientelistic linkages.¹²

Chile's large urban population notwithstanding, Frei also wanted to promote agrarian reform and proposed expropriating those properties which were poorly managed, according to the 'normal levels of productivity' within any given region. Broad sectors of the Chilean population saw a need for reform in the countryside by 1964. Chilean agricultural production had suffered from poor productivity since the 1930s; it had not grown rapidly enough to address the needs of a growing (and urbanising) population. Frei and his associates hoped that by promoting land reform they could stimulate

¹¹ Eduardo Frei, 'Mensaje 1965,' pp. 5–6. Regarding the need for organisation, see 'Mensaje 1966,' pp. 17–18. For further information regarding the Christian Democratic understanding of the relationship between popular organisation and the needs of Chilean society, see Jorge Ahumada, *La crisis integral de Chile* (Santiago, 1966), pp. 21–3, 41, and 43–4. Regarding the Centros de Madre, see 'Mensaje 1967,' p. 6. The longer quotation is from the presidential message of 1969. Regarding the Centros de Madres, see also Heidi Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict: The Politics of Gender, Sexuality, and Labor in the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1950–1973* (Durham, NC, 2002), particularly pp. 146–56.

¹² Frei, 'Mensaje 1966,' pp. 18–19; See Lehmann, 'Political Incorporation versus Political Instability,' p. 369.

the peasantry to abandon subsistence production and help 'feed the national market'.¹³ Others in the administration argued that what was at stake was social justice.¹⁴ At the same time, however, Frei argued that agrarian reform had to be more than just redistribution of land; it was a form of 'social and human investment'.¹⁵ Peasants, in particular, needed to abandon traditional mentalities and become aware of being part of a larger process of national economic development.¹⁶ Christian Democratic reformers like Chonchol, the most prominent Christian Democrat concerned with these issues, saw peasants as being 'excessively subject to forces of nature'. Peasants needed to embrace an awareness of 'modern man's capacity to dominate nature through science and technology'. They needed to be receptive to new agricultural methods and the potential benefits of commercialisation, and to develop 'new social aspirations' that drive 'men to progress'. Chile was dependent on the 'importation of over \$100 million worth of food each year', despite 'nearly ideal agricultural conditions' in its central valley. Chonchol himself was concerned that agrarian reform would just turn the peasant into a 'traditional landowner who will be a dead weight on the future economic progress of the country, or a petty bourgeois who will join with the most reactionary elements and sectors of society'. The values that a transformed *campesino* would exhibit were dynamism, cooperation and solidarity. Chonchol, like many Christian Democrats, particularly those on the party's left, also wanted to promote what they defined as communitarian over individualistic values. The new *campesinos* would have a less provincial vision of the world and a 'dynamic vision of the destiny of his country'. The *campesino* would become 'habituated to assuming responsibilities and making decisions by themselves'.¹⁷ Generally, the values associated with the new

¹³ Frei, 'Mensaje 1965,' pp. 51–4. From 1934 to 1964, according to government statistics, agricultural production increased 1.8 per cent per year, while the Chilean population increased 2.5 per cent during the same period. See also Frei, 'Mensaje 1970'. For a recent examination of the process of agrarian reform in Chile, see Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict*. For a conservative critique of Frei's agrarian reform, see José Garrido R., Cristián Guerrero and María Soledad Valdés, *Historia de la reforma agraria en Chile* (Santiago, 1988), particularly pp. 97–133. To place thinking on land reform in a larger intellectual historical context, see Lehmann, *Democracy and Development in Latin America*, pp. 9–10, 23, 33–4, and 44 and Ian Roxborough, *Theories of Underdevelopment* (London, 1979), pp. 31–2 and 101–2. A good summary of the reform can be found in Joseph R. Thome, 'Law, Conflict, and Change: Frei's Law and Allende's Agrarian Reform,' in William C. Thiesenhusen (ed.), *Searching for Agrarian Reform in Latin America* (Boston, 1989), pp. 191–201.

¹⁴ Jacques Chonchol, *El desarrollo de América Latina y la reforma agraria* Second Edition (Santiago, 1965), p. 11.

¹⁵ Frei, 'Mensaje 1965,' p. 26.

¹⁶ Frei, 'Mensaje 1966,' p. 331. See also Chonchol, *Desarrollo de América Latina*, pp. 73–4.

¹⁷ Jacques Chonchol, *La reforma agraria como proceso dinámico de integración en una sociedad que se transforma* (Santiago, 1967), pp. 10–11, 19, 23–4, 26 and 28. This was a lecture given at an INDAP course in 1967. Regarding Chilean agriculture, see Paul E. Sigmund, *The Overthrow of Allende and the Politics of Chile, 1964–1976* (Pittsburgh, 1977), p. 20. Stallings notes that

mentality would include ‘cooperation’, a tendency to participate in ‘organised activity’, ‘dedication to work’, ‘social solidarity’, a ‘rational attitude towards consumption’ and a ‘confidence in his own abilities to create as subject in the world and as builder of his own world’.¹⁸ Drawings used in literacy instruction illustrated the word ‘*compañero*’ by showing a student at a desk handing a fellow student a pencil to write with.¹⁹ Peasants were expected to develop ways to define and solve their own problems, whether technical or social.²⁰ Moreover, peasants were being encouraged to break out of their isolation and form their own cooperatives and unions through INDAP. ‘Only organised *campesinos* can push forward and take in their hands the direction of the process of transformation of rural society’, Frei contended.²¹

The literary programme

In order to further his goal of eliminating illiteracy, Frei appointed Waldemar Cortés Carabantes to head such a programme in the Ministry of Education. Cortés in 1963 had suggested the need to find more ‘dynamic’ ways to address the issue. While three-quarters of Chile’s population was already literate by 1930, decades in advance of most other Latin American countries, illiteracy had not dropped sufficiently since then (perhaps by as little as five per cent between 1930 and 1952). If present trends continued, it would take Chile sixty years to achieve what was considered an ‘acceptable rate of illiteracy of between four and five per cent’. Moreover, in addition to the twenty to twenty-five per cent of the population that was illiterate by any definition, a further twenty per cent was either semiliterate or illiterate because they simply had neglected to cultivate their former abilities to read or write. Since the size of the Chilean population continued to increase, the absolute number of Chilean illiterates was increasing. This was in large part due to serious problems in the Chilean educational system, not least

‘The meaning of the term “communitarian” was always very vague, but the basic idea seemed to be an emphasis on the common interests of workers and owners. In negative terms, it was the rejection of the process of the class struggle that the Marxist parties stressed.’ Stallings, *Class Conflict and Economic Development*, p. 100. See also Brian Loveman, *Struggle in the Countryside: Politics and Rural Labor in Chile, 1919–1973* (Bloomington, 1976), pp. 242–4. For a discussion of right-wing opposition to Chonchol, see Kaufman, *Politics of Land Reform in Chile*, pp. 163–5. Regarding the often age-based differences between the different factions in the Christian Democratic party, see pp. 84–93.

¹⁸ Paulo de Tarso Santos, ‘Capacitación en Reforma Agraria (La Experiencia de ICIRA en Chile),’ Document Presented by ICIRA at II Reunión de Ejecutivos de Reforma Agraria, Santiago, 16 Dec. 1967, p. 11. ¹⁹ See folder ‘25 Carteles’ at the Instituto Paulo Freire.

²⁰ Paulo de Tarso Santos, ‘Educación agrícola y desarrollo rural: versión preliminar,’ Conferencia Mundial Sobre Enseñanza y Capacitación Agrícola, Copenhagen, 1970, p. 31.

²¹ Frei, ‘Mensaje 1967,’ p. 342 and ‘Mensaje 1970,’ p. 31. For more on INDAP, see p. 33.

the inadequate numbers of schools and teachers, particularly in rural areas, as well as the poor condition of existing schools. In rural Chile 36 per cent of the population was illiterate. Although Cortés argued that a long-term solution required an improvement in the schools, he was also well aware of the urgency of addressing the problems of those who were well beyond school age. Previous campaigns, including the *Cuerpo Cívico de Alfabetización Popular*, organised in 1944, had largely depended upon the efforts of volunteers, as well as the working assumption that those who knew how to read and write necessarily knew how to teach people how to read and write. Those involved in adult education, Cortés argued, had to have special training in the field, as well as material and technical support for their efforts. Literacy campaigns, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), worked best when they were combined with more comprehensive plans to transform social and economic conditions in the countryside. Chile, Cortés had maintained prior to Frei's inauguration, needed a national campaign that reached into all areas of the country. The traditional night school was no longer sufficient, he insisted; instead, schools should be established at the workplace. Moreover, the practical benefits of education needed to become clear to adult students, otherwise they would abandon their studies. New trends in adult education focused on the education of the community and not just of the individual. While not denying the need to create opportunities for personal growth, Cortés thought that it was even more important that workers and *campesinos*, in an educational context, should develop their own organisations and sense of group identity, to help them in their larger goal of improving the quality of life within their communities. Adult education, furthermore, could not simply be primary or secondary education taught at night but had to take into account the special needs and interests of a mature student body, as well as the broader needs of Chilean society as a whole.²²

Soon after being chosen to lead the kind of campaign he had called for, Cortés learned that a man named Paulo Freire had already been working with mass literacy campaigns in Brazil and had developed a new technique which involved the use of what Freire called 'generating words', words that had a special meaning in the daily life of the student. In their first meeting, Freire, with what Cortés called his 'fraternal and disinterested spirit', refused

²² Waldemar Cortés Carabantes, 'Formas muertas y dinámicas en nuestra educación de adultos,' *Revista de Educación* 93–94 (July–Dec. 1963), pp. 11–25. See also the final report on *La educación de adultos en Chile* (Santiago, 1969), p. 9. Cortés himself argued that the illiteracy rate was as high as 59 per cent in rural Chile. Regarding literacy rates in the countryside on the eve of Frei's inauguration, see Thome, 'Law, Conflict, and Change: Frei's Law and Allende's Agrarian Reform,' p. 192.

to accept royalties for the use of his method and began to work with the ministry of education, as well as INDAP.²³

Beginning with the presidential message of May 1966, Frei took note of the new learning techniques that had begun to be applied on a national basis. More than 2,500 primary school teachers were already employed in the literacy campaign. Early expectations were that 100,000 adults could learn how to read and write at an anticipated 2,600 local community education centres spread out throughout Chile's broad stretch of territory. These organisations reflected Frei's larger plan for the encouragement of 'active and creative' participation of people in the solution of common problems.²⁴ Chonchol, for his part, considered education an essential condition for the 'intensification' of agricultural production; peasants, he argued, needed to 'open themselves mentally'. Moreover, it was considered an urgent necessity to prepare peasants themselves to perform some of the functions that agricultural extension agents performed in wealthier countries like the United States.²⁵

Freire and his associates travelled throughout Chile, but especially in the central zone where land concentration was particularly high. Cortés and Freire began to adapt the latter's methods and styles of presentation to the Chilean milieu, to the particular needs of the Chilean *campesinos*, and to the different linguistic demands of Spanish, as they formulated an intensive literacy campaign. Unlike previous literacy campaigns, the teachers working for Cortés were paid a salary and were compensated for expenses during their training periods as well. In keeping with Frei's larger social vision and their own personal philosophies, Cortés and Freire placed an emphasis on the students being the subject, rather than the object of their own education, and on encouraging them through the educational process to become integrated as active and creative contributing members of their communities, so that they could participate consciously in the development of Chile. In Chile, Freire's method became known as the psycho-social method. Primary school teachers were trained in Freire's philosophy and techniques. At first, nothing was written down, and Freire and his associates began to develop their ideas by gathering information from their *campesino* 'sources' and students in order to understand their social reality and present their material in a way that seemed appropriate for their daily lives.

²³ Augusto Nibaldo Silva Trivinos and Balduino Antonio Andreola, 'Da opressão para a esperança: o tempo do exílio de Ernani Maria Fiori e Paulo Freire no Chile: contribuição de Fiori e de Freire para a educação chilena,' Relatório de Pesquisa, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul, Faculdade de Educação, 1994, pp. 5 and 18–19. This invaluable report, based largely on oral interviews, is available at the Instituto Paulo Freire in São Paulo.

²⁴ Frei, 'Mensaje 1966,' pp. 189–90.

²⁵ Chonchol, *Desarrollo de América Latina*, pp. 9, 22, 28, 75–6, and 78.

The adoption of Freire's method was crucial, because it represented more than just a selection of one technique over another. The method involved an attempt to 'produce a change in the consciousness' of the student. Reading knowledge was only one element of the literacy campaign, according to Cortés; the adult student would also begin to view himself and his own reality critically. While looking at slide images representing his life, his 'customs, his beliefs, his social practices, [and] group attitudes', the student began to 'discuss his reality' with his peers. The words he was learning to read were those related to his 'concrete situation'. The distinction between nature and culture was central to the Freirean understanding of the transformation of consciousness. Students began to understand themselves as makers of and participants in culture. The student then learned to break up everyday words into their phonetic elements and make new words using those elements, taking part in his own 'intellectual creation'. The teacher's role was merely to facilitate dialogue and to 'stimulate the reaction' to be produced in their students' 'innermost' consciousness. Those taught using Freire's method were thought not only to learn to read and write quickly but also to value themselves more highly.²⁶

In 1966 and 1967 the *Jefatura de Planes Extraordinarios de Educación de Adultos* in the ministry of education produced textbooks that laid out the theoretical groundwork for the literacy training programmes as well as providing short readings as part of a three-month course. These books provide important insight into the ideology of that branch of the Frei administration. They are theoretically grounded in Freire's teachings regarding the need for adult students to become active agents in their own history and education and Frei's desire to incorporate the unincorporated and have them engage critically in modern society. *Campesinos* were now to engage in an examination of the most significant elements of their daily life while they also 'awaken[ed]' to 'the feeling of social cooperation and living together' and their 'full integration into society'.²⁷ As Cortés Carabantes argued, the newly literate were moving beyond their former position as minors and being elevated 'to the condition of men and women conscious of the high value they have as human beings'. Cortés, Freire and Chonchol were all interested in seeing students replace their 'magical consciousness', in which they attributed supernatural causes for things that happen in their daily life, with critical consciousness. Cortés provided an example of this kind of thinking when he discussed the fishermen of Dichato, near Concepción. These men

²⁶ Cortés Carabantes, 'Planes Extraordinarios,' pp. 30–1.

²⁷ See 'Gúia didáctica para el profesor,' in *Raíz y Espiga*, pp. 1, 3 and 4. See Lehmann, 'Political Incorporation versus Political Instability,' pp. 367–70. See also Claudio Orrego Vicuña, *Solidaridad o violencia: el dilema de Chile. La revolución en libertad: una racionalidad democrática para el cambio social* (Santiago, 1969), pp. 61–2 and 215–16.

believed that fish fled those with an excessive desire for profit. Therefore after a good catch, the fishermen took time off work for a few days. 'Their lack of reflection' led 'them to a magical action that hurt them'. Cortés, following Freire, wanted Chilean illiterates to develop a critical consciousness and become aware of themselves as historical actors in the world, who could change their own reality.²⁸

Freire's method went beyond a 'pure memorization of words, disconnected from the existential experience of men'. Man was a man because 'he worked and in working transformed the world'. Alphabetisation could not be 'disassociated from his work', because the 'word with which one plays, if it is true, it is work, it is reflection, and it is action on the world'.²⁹ Ideally, the newly literate would learn to 'speak their own words'.³⁰ Decades later, Freire remembered 'the intensity of the peasants' involvement when they were analysing their local and national reality'. With the 'culture of silence' that defined traditional agrarian relations in the Chilean countryside broken, words spilled out all over themselves and the discussions continued virtually unabated.³¹

For Freire, the process of agrarian reform with which his literacy training programme was associated demanded 'a permanent critical examination of transforming actions and their results'. It was necessary to go beyond a mechanical view of the process, and to recognise that a social reality created by men could only be transformed by them. It would not be enough to replace magical thinking with mechanical, 'economistic' thinking. Neither mode of thinking was, from Freire's perspective, critical or dialectical and both tended to minimise individuals, who became only 'a mere object of change'. One cannot impose changes *for* or *on* people, but only *with* them, as subjects, Freire argued. Any attempt by agronomists to introduce new techniques that would enhance production had to recognise not only the historical and cultural conditions in which the *campesinos* lived but also the historical and cultural conditions of the extension workers themselves. Extension agents had to recognise the knowledge that the *campesinos* already possessed, without thinking that *campesinos* 'should remain in the state in which they were encountered' in terms of their relation to the natural world. *Campesinos* should not be treated as people in whom the extension agents were going to 'deposit ... knowledge'. Nor could men simply be treated as a 'mere instrument of production'. Agrarian reform was not fundamentally about productivity but, instead, about transforming human beings. As long

²⁸ Waldemar Cortés Carabantes, 'Introducción: Manual del Método Psico-Social para la Enseñanza de Adultos' (Santiago, 1966), pp. 1–3.

²⁹ *La alfabetización funcional en Chile* (Santiago, 1968) p. 6.

³⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 7–10, 14 and 20.

³¹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope: Reliving Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Robert R. Barr (New York, 1999) p. 38.

as government officials recognised the *campesinos* as people who ‘transform nature with their work’, they could understand *campesinos*’ resistance to more efficient means of production as a cultural issue. *Campesino* mentalities had been formed in a particular rigid and dehumanising social structure, a ‘culture of silence which was closed and opposed to dialogue’, and *campesinos* were now having to address the new social reality of the *asentamiento*.³²

There were inherent difficulties with Freire’s method, as Cortés himself recognised. It was fundamental, he argued, that the new ‘critical consciousness must not navigate in a vacuum’. It had to ‘open people to concrete changes’ in the way they lived their lives. Otherwise, they felt bitter and profoundly frustrated. ‘We were conscious that to achieve this, we needed large structural changes’ in society, as well as concrete changes in people’s working lives. Otherwise, newly literate people would lapse back into illiteracy, since they would discover that knowing how to read and write did not change their particular situation.³³

Roughly 800,000 copies of the introductory reading manuals were distributed by CORA.³⁴ These books tried to inculcate Christian Democratic ideology, and they focused on issues of particular concern to the Frei administration. A story titled ‘The Grievs of an Illiterate’, for example, made clear the difficulties faced by a man who had not yet learned to read or write. He could not read danger signs or employment ads. Nor could he read a letter written to him by the woman he loved. A friend had to read her letters to him and write his responses for him. His friend thereby became acquainted with intimate details of José’s life.³⁵

The readers provided a further opportunity for the Frei administration to promote goals such as agrarian reform. In an article on rural society, the author discussed the plan to give *inquilinos* (tenants) land which they had never had before. In another, the reasons why the right to private property could be infringed when rural properties had been abandoned or were inadequately managed were laid out.³⁶ These books also focused on the *campesinos*’ need to organise in order to ‘unite their forces to those of the government and thereby improve their cultural, economic, and social conditions’. The manuals described what each type of organisation would do and provided a basic history of labour unions and their role in improving the quality of workers’ lives. Moreover, they promoted the idea of Chile itself as the ‘national community’, and stressed the unity of the Chilean people rather than competing class interests. ‘Pueblo’, quite literally, was the last word in

³² *La alfabetización funcional*, pp. 2–5

³³ Silva Trivinos and Andreola, ‘Opressão para Esperança,’ pp. 143–8.

³⁴ *La educación de adultos en Chile*, p. 23.

³⁵ ‘Los apuros de un analfabeto’ in ‘Lectura para adultos: primer nivel,’ pp. 6–9

³⁶ ‘La sociedad rural,’ in ‘Comunidad: tercer nivel,’ p. 35. See also pp. 62–8.

one of the manuals. There was a call for the general need for ‘profound change in attitudes of Chileans’ regarding ways they could improve their quality of life, including by adopting more mechanised forms of cultivation in the countryside. The manuals urged the *campesinos* to ‘accept technical help from the Ministry of Agriculture and CORA’ and assured them that the problem of unequal distribution of land was ‘being corrected’. Chile, the *campesinos* were reminded, was ‘**in a process of development**’ (emphasis in the original). The Chilean people should ‘support honest governments’ that were directing their ‘destiny’. Photos depicted previous conditions in which peasants worked unhappily, whereas now they owned their own houses and had schools for the children. They had begun to work for themselves and their country to achieve economic liberation, ‘the ultimate goal of agrarian reform’. The final photograph in one manual portrayed a couple dancing; the accompanying caption remarked, ‘for the *campesino*, new horizons are opening up’.³⁷

The manuals focused on social issues, as well. They preached the virtue of temperance and the dangers of alcoholism. According to government sources, Chile had 250,000 alcoholics. They noted the damage alcohol posed to heart and liver. The distinction between human beings and animals being central to Christian Democratic humanism, the manuals noted that alcohol had a brutalising effect on men and led to a ‘low level of moral life’.³⁸ The readers promoted female domesticity to a certain degree, noting what they called women’s special duties in keeping houses clean, and emphasising the man’s role as head of the household, as well as the need to prevent the disintegration of the nuclear family. In the advanced reading book, however, there was an emphasis on recognising the fact that women now performed many different kinds of work in Chile and, by law, had equal rights. Women, after all, had played a key role in Frei’s election.³⁹

The manuals’ inevitable tendency to standardise content for discussion conflicted with Freire’s theories about following *campesinos*’ leads in educating them. More generally, they blurred the distinction between developing a critical consciousness and a Christian Democratic consciousness. The

³⁷ ‘La organización de la comunidad,’ pp. 38–9, ‘La Patria,’ p. 43, ‘Hacia una vida mejor,’ p. 71, ‘Los sindicatos,’ p. 82; ‘Los cultivos,’ p. 87. ‘La industria,’ pp. 92–3; ‘Chile: un país en marcha,’ p. 122; ‘La vida del campesino chileno,’ pp. 123–8 and ‘Razones y fines de la reforma agraria,’ pp. 128–30, all in ‘Comunidad: tercer nivel.’ ‘Manual del método psico-social para la enseñanza de adultos,’ p. 60.

³⁸ ‘Alcohol,’ in ‘Lectura para adultos: primer nivel,’ pp. 35–6 and ‘Comunidad: tercer nivel,’ p. 23. See also ‘Alcoholismo: enfermedad nacional’ (Santiago, 1966), p. 21. Regarding earlier Popular Front initiatives against alcoholism, see Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, *Gendered Compromises: Political Cultures and the State in Chile, 1920–1950* (Chapel Hill, 2000), pp. 162–6.

³⁹ ‘Lectura para adultos: primer nivel,’ p. 49; ‘Lectura para adultos: segundo nivel,’ p. 29. ‘Comunidad: tercer nivel,’ pp. 13, 29 and 36.

readings clearly tended to celebrate what the Christian Democrats were trying to achieve, as much as to push the *campesinos* themselves to define their own path toward liberation.

The potential and yet also the difficulties inherent in the relationship between government officials and those they wanted to transform are made clear in a series of recordings made on magnetic tape in October 1968 by a 'Circle of Thematic Investigation' in an *asentamiento*. Following the Freire model, groups of *asentados* were asked to look at drawings that related to their daily life projected by a slide projector and discuss what they saw. They clearly recognised their own reality in the drawings. 'There are many *fundos* around here in which you work with a man on horseback behind', one *campesino* remarked. The traditional agrarian system allowed people who did not work but just watched others work to receive 'ill-earned gains'. Now, the discussants contended, they could work without a *mayordomo*.⁴⁰ They also saw images of strikes and asserted that things were changing, and they now felt free. They had more enthusiasm these days to work more, to learn more and be more productive.⁴¹ One has to wonder whether *campesinos* were simply saying what they thought the government officials wanted to hear; in any case, the officials, as we shall see, were not as reassured as one might expect them to have been.

The transcripts reveal certain tensions between the officials and the *campesinos*. Teachers who quite explicitly defined themselves as urban expressed an earnestly felt desire to get to know rural people through initial discussions to lay the groundwork for future courses defined by *campesino* needs and interests.⁴² But when asked what kinds of courses they needed, one man replied, 'rapid ones'. In the short term, in any case, it was often difficult to schedule times to meet, given work and family obligations. On reviewing the transcripts, moreover, government officials expressed concern that discussion coordinators sometimes 'intervened too quickly and didn't accept the group's initial silence'. The government officials, for their part, expressed scepticism that significant change had in fact taken place. Government officials tried to reinforce the idea that the *asentados*, by definition, no longer had bosses.⁴³ Officials feared that CORA itself represented a reality only glimpsed to a limited degree. Even where *campesinos* demonstrated an interest in rebelling, they still feared the *patrón*. Moreover, *asentados* continued to refer to the former boss Vicente Iñiquez (whose land had been partially expropriated to create the *asentamiento*) as the 'true *patrón*'. Don Vicente

⁴⁰ Transcript of recording of *Círculo de Investigación Temática*, 3 Oct. 1968 with men of *asentamiento*, *El Recurso*, pp. 1–3, 6, 14 and 15, available in Instituto Paulo Freire, São Paulo.

⁴¹ Transcript of 'Círculo de Investigación Temática,' 13 Nov. 1968, pp. 6–7.

⁴² 'Círculo de Investigación Temática,' 20 Nov. 1968, discussion with men, p. 1.

⁴³ 'Círculo de Investigación Temática,' 20 Nov. 1968, p. 6.

remained the ‘central figure’ in their understanding of the world. Yet government officials, for their part, failed to recognise that the *asentados* had their own criticism of their former boss, which was suggested by their belief that Don Vicente had sold his soul to the devil and had ‘both sexes’. Government officials also were concerned that the leaders in the *asentados* were more likely to participate in discussion. Government officials, many of them women, were also concerned that the rural women were reluctant to talk (and, for that matter, that coordinators intervened more during their discussions with the women). Women did not recognise what was meant to be conveyed by a drawing of a meeting to discuss problems of the *asentamiento*: ‘There are only men there; it must be a sports club.’ Women in the *asentamientos* even argued that they did not ‘have a right to give an opinion’. *Asentado* husbands, for their part, did not always allow women to take part in meetings. Women, it was clear, as well as the young, were often marginalised under the *asentamiento* system. Moreover, the literacy training courses themselves sometimes seem to have been less successful with women.⁴⁴

The broader context: paternalism, factionalism and radicalisation

To understand the complex dynamics at work as Freire and his associates sought to teach people how to read and write and to transform their own consciousness and as some *campesinos* were given more access to land, one must step back and consider the larger social and political picture.

President Frei himself had recognised the pitfalls of paternalism. Cortés had feared that the new organisations being formed would be seen as just a ‘present from the elite’.⁴⁵ Freire made the need to avoid paternalistic attitudes the cornerstone of his own discussions with government officials. He warned against the customary ‘feeling of superiority [and] domination with which agronomists encounter *campesinos* in traditional agrarian structures’. Freire wanted them to reconceptualise the relationship between agronomists and *campesinos*. Instead of ‘extension’, which suggested a social and intellectual superior offering a hand in a godlike or messianic way, he wanted agents to see themselves as engaged in communication whereby they would come to understand how the peasants saw the world. Agronomists and *campesinos*

⁴⁴ Margarita Depetris, ‘Visita July 14, 1968,’ pp. 7 and 10 and ‘Breve Esquema Explicativo de los Principios Básicos de las Técnicas Proyectadas,’ pp. 6–7, 9, and 11; Maria Edy Ferreira, ‘Algunas Observaciones sobre el Asentamiento, El Recurso,’ accompanying transcript of ‘Círculo Investigación Temática,’ IPF; Maria Edy Ferreira, *Tendencia del poder entre los campesinos asentados* (Santiago, 1970), p. 9; Clara Arce R., ‘Informe Socio-Cultural: El Recurso,’ 17 June 1968 accompanying ‘Círculo de Investigación Temática,’ IPF, p. 10.

⁴⁵ Cortés, ‘Introducción,’ p. 4.

were to be engaged in a project of mutual transformation.⁴⁶ Peasants would incorporate themselves and not be manipulated as Freire felt occurred under populist leaders.⁴⁷

The Freire model at its most idealistic and empowering was exemplified by efforts made in areas such as the province of Colchagua where rates of illiteracy were as high as 57 per cent and in which literacy education became the 'total responsibility of rural unions'. There, one of Freire's associates reported, the *campesinos* took this task extremely seriously and had 'absolute confidence in their capacity to realise it. They [were] firmly convinced that learning to read and write' would be the 'key' that would 'open up the door to a new world for all the peasants'. 'Only a *campesino* can teach another *campesino*,' they argued. 'You functionaries are in a different world than ours and cannot communicate with us because you are part of that culture.'⁴⁸

Freire hoped to extend this system throughout Chile, with 60 *campesinos* learning his method and then in turn teaching an additional 500, and those 500 teaching 5,000, and so on.⁴⁹ This clearly had the potential to go beyond the traditional paternalistic dynamic.

Some Christian Democrats seemed convinced that the days of paternalism and deference were already over. 'The "new man of Chile",' according to one Christian Democratic leader, 'no longer bows his head but meets all men as equals'.⁵⁰ As one *asentado* remarked in a discussion with government officials, now one could talk without tipping his hat and asking permission from the *patrón*.⁵¹ Yet at the same time, Freire observed and saw the need to confront the 'marks of old structures colliding with the new forms of behaviour demanded by recently installed structures' like the *asentamiento*.⁵²

But paternalism was not just a problem of old structures; it was woven deeply into the fabric of the Frei administration's reforms. The state-managed *asentamientos*, for example, which had been envisioned as transitional institutions, came to be seen as a more permanent solution to problems in the countryside. If agrarian reform was intended, as President Frei had suggested, to 'turn the *campesino* into his own *patrón*', CORA, as the owner of the *asentamientos*, often seemed to have taken the place of the old *patrón*, even though many *campesinos* clearly would have preferred individual

⁴⁶ Paulo Freire, *Extensión o comunicación* (Santiago, 1969), pp. 12, 19, 34–35, and 48. (Chonchol wrote the introduction.)

⁴⁷ Paulo Freire, 'Actividades desarrolladas en el año de 1968: informe anual' (Santiago, 1969), pp. 1–5, 7, and 19. Regarding fatalism, see also 'El rol del trabajador social,' p. 10.

⁴⁸ María Antonieta Saa in *Alfabetización funcional*; Julio Salgado Moya in *Alfabetización funcional*.

⁴⁹ Freire, 'Actividades desarrolladas en el año de 1968,' p. 11.

⁵⁰ 'Fuentelba Speech at PDC National Plenary Council, 28 Oct. 1968,' p. 4 in RG 84, Box 179, American Embassy, Santiago, Political Parties, NA.

⁵¹ Transcript of 'Círculo de Investigación Temática,' 13 Nov. 1968, p. 9.

⁵² Paulo Freire, 'El asentamiento como una totalidad' (Santiago, 1968), pp. 2–5, 7–9 and 12.

ownership. But *asentamientos* also hired seasonal workers who did not receive the same rights and benefits as the *asentados*.⁵³ Even where it had been unions which had pushed for the expropriation of land, once *asentamientos* had been established, unions tended to decline in importance, in part, it was suggested, because CORA officials themselves considered them disruptive to the *asentamiento's* operations.⁵⁴ And they were not the only Frei administration officials who were sending mixed messages regarding the growth of unions in the countryside. Frei's emphasis on the countryside, in any case, had hardly been politically disinterested. The Christian Democrats lagged behind the Marxist parties in organising the industrial and mining sectors. The unorganised countryside, therefore, offered an opportunity for the Christian Democrats. INDAP had 505 people already employed in promoting the formation of unions, long before a law definitively legalising them was passed in 1967. While unions affiliated with the Christian Democrats were particularly successful in organising the *campesinos*, rival CD rural unions themselves were soon feuding. The Christian Democratic unions also resented the fact that INDAP itself was organising its own unions, as well. The leaders of unions which were aligned with the Christian Democratic party and yet institutionally independent considered Chonchol in particular to be unsympathetic to their unions, which he feared would work against the party and the government; he was even accused of trying to eliminate the independent unions. INDAP-affiliated unions, in any case, grew faster than any other in the year following the definitive legalisation of rural unions in April 1967. There was even some suspicion within the US embassy that Chonchol was 'trying to construct a personal political base', but some of the other 'independent unions' had themselves received help from the International Development Foundation and the Agency for International Development, and, it was presumed, the Central Intelligence Agency. One INDAP organiser in Nuble province argued that the 'sheep-like mentality of [local *campesinos*] underscores the problems of nurturing a flourishing, independent campesino movement'. Frei, who had warned of the dangers of sectarianism, tried to stand above the fray and not 'specifically endorse any particular union', but these conflicts continued to be serious, not least of all

⁵³ Frei's words from Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict*, p. 82. Regarding the complex relations in the *asentamiento*, see also pp. 180–4; Loveman, *Struggle in the Countryside*, pp. 252–6 and 275; Lehmann, 'Political Incorporation versus Political Stability,' pp. 380–3; Lehmann, also his 'Peasant Consciousness and Agrarian Reform in Chile,' *Archives Européennes de Sociologie*, vol. 13, no. 2 (1972): pp. 309 and 322–3; Thome, 'Law, Conflict, and Change,' p. 200. For a more positive assessment of the *asentamiento* as a transitional structure, see Marion R. Brown, 'Radical Reformism in Chile, 1964–1973,' in Thiesenhusen, *Searching for Agrarian Reform in Latin America*, p. 237. See also Kaufman, *Politics of Land Tenure in Chile*, pp. 115–23 and Ferreira, *Tendencias del poder*, p. 28.

⁵⁴ Ferreira, *Tendencias del poder*, pp. 7 and 10.

because, as David Lehmann has argued, unlike the land reform programme, the unionisation drive involved more people and was, ultimately, less under the government's control. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly true that the Christian Democrats were able to make gains in the countryside at the expense of the Marxist parties.⁵⁵

Moreover, there were certain economic, political, and social realities that were making it difficult for the Frei administration's goals to be accomplished. Inflation, which had declined in the early years of the Frei administration, soon climbed back over 30 per cent, and this led Frei to push for a curb on strikes, as well as for a general austerity programme.⁵⁶ The worst drought in 100 years of record keeping in Chile was wreaking havoc in the countryside, as well.⁵⁷ Rural union leaders accused landowners of using the drought as a pretext to get rid of workers active in unions. Some in the administration, like Chonchol, hoped that the drought would provide an 'ideal opportunity to accelerate agrarian reform'.⁵⁸ *Campesinos*, for their part, had their own understanding of the drought; it was the 'revenge of Saint Peter' because his day was no longer 'kept holy'.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ See Dean, 'PDC: Party in Search of a Role,' p. 8; 'The Government and the PDC,' p. 8; see also 10 Jan. 1967 'Report on First Colchagua Province Campesino Conference,' in RG 84, Box 173, 'Labor Management Relations' folder, NA; 29 March 1967, pp. 1–5 letter by Ambassador Dungan, 'Mercurio Editorial Economic Powers in Chile,' in same box, 'Economic Affairs (General)' folder; 'A View of the Campo,' in RG 84, Box 176; K. A. Guenther, 'Memorandum for the Files, 5 May 1967,' in RG 84, Box 177, American Embassy, Santiago; L. Spielman, 'Pre-Election Peace Maneuvers in the Campesino Field,' 17 May 1968, in RG 84, Box 177. Dungan, 'Community Action in Otingue: Not yet the Millennium,' 29 March 1967 in RG 84, Box 176, American Embassy, Santiago, 'Political Affairs/Relations: Elections Municipal/Provincial' folder. 'CNC Sets Up First Legal Chilean Campesino Federation,' 30 Dec. 1967 in RG 84, Box 177, American Embassy, Santiago, 'National Organizations *Campesinos*' Folder, NA. Regarding funding for Christian Democratic trade unions, see Lester Spielman, 'Recommendation on Continued Embassy Assistance to the CNC,' 13 March 1967 in RG 84, Box 173, American Embassy, Santiago, AID 1967. See also Roxborough, O'Brien, and Roddick, *Chile, the State and Revolution*, pp. 58–62 and Lehmann, 'Political Incorporation versus Political Stability,' pp. 372 and 378. Lehmann refers to 'promoción popular' generally as 'paternalistic agitation'. See p. 377. See also his 'Peasant Consciousness and Agrarian Reform in Chile,' p. 300. For an analysis of the tensions between rural unions and government officials, see Kaufman, *Politics of Land Reform in Chile*, pp. 137–44 and *Movimiento campesino chileno*, pp. 259 and 262. Regarding INDAP organising, see pp. 25 and 59. Regarding Socialist Party understandings of Frei's intentions regarding unions 'that escaped his paternalistic policies,' see its pamphlet '1966: año de la organización y las luchas campesinas,' p. 50.

⁵⁶ Alan Angell, 'Chile since 1958,' in Leslie Bethell (ed.), *Chile since Independence* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 150.

⁵⁷ Collier and Sater, *History of Chile*, p. 315; Robert J. Alexander, *The Tragedy of Chile* (Westport, CT, 1978), p. 107.

⁵⁸ Korry, 'Politics of Drought' Telegram, 9 Sept. 1968 in RG 84, Box 179, American Embassy, Santiago, 'Social Conditions' Folder.

⁵⁹ Paulo Freire, 'Actividades desarrolladas en el año de 1968: informe anual' (Santiago, 1969), p. 4.

There were political problems, as well, both within and outside the party. Within the administration and the Christian Democratic party, there were factions that were extremely diverse in ideological terms. Some party and administration members like Chonchol historically had argued not just for a 'third way' between communism and capitalism, but for the 'total abolition of the capitalist way of life'.⁶⁰ To some degree, governmental agencies were themselves divided politically, with CORA being more 'reformist' and INDAP more 'progressive'.⁶¹ Conflicts between factions in the Christian Democratic party were becoming more acute by the half-way point in the Frei administration in 1967. Some even claimed that the party was already ideologically bankrupt.⁶² Certainly, not all members of the Frei administration were equally committed to Freire's ideas. Representatives of CORA were said to be primarily interested in increasing production and thought that the hour-long meetings involved in generating critical consciousness distracted from this goal. A more practical consideration was the fact that the party had failed to win substantial support in municipal elections in April 1967. This created further splits within the party between those who argued for the need to 'consolidate' and those who wanted to accelerate the process of reform. The Christian Democrats were losing their support in the middle class, political analysts argued, particularly in the cities of Santiago and Valparaíso, due to the priority the administration had given to issues concerning the poor in the city and countryside. Small farmers too, an estimated 15 per cent of Chilean voters, were particularly resentful of INDAP policies that were antagonistic toward the 'capitalistic, selfish individualism' said to be typical of such men; they decried the general 'politicisation' of the countryside, became increasingly disaffected, and withdrew their support from the party. Frei himself began to draw back from the more revolutionary aspects of his programmes.⁶³ Frei was convinced that because of his administration's initiatives, the *campesino* was already

⁶⁰ See Jacques Chonchol and Julio Silva S., *Hacia un mundo comunitario: condiciones de una política social cristiana* (Santiago, 1951), p. 5. ⁶¹ See Williamson, *Paulo Freire*, p. 35.

⁶² See Dean, 'PDC: Party in Search of a Role,' p. 10.

⁶³ See 'The Government and the PDC: The Gap between Ideology and Reality,' 12 July 1967, in RG 84, Box 176, American Embassy, Santiago, pp. 1 and 3; 'The New PDC Directiva: A Moment of Truth for President Frei?' in RG 84, Box 176, American Embassy, Santiago, NA; Ralph Dungan, 'Municipal Election Results Signal New Political Ball Game,' pp. 1, 2, 9, 13 and 15 in RG 84, Box 176, 'Political Affairs and Relations: Elections Municipal/Provincial' folder. Frei's conversation with visiting US Senators regarding the consolidation of the 'Revolution in Liberty' is in Korry's 19 Jan. 1968 letter in RG 84, Box 179. Regarding small farmers, see 'Chilean Small Farmer Disenchantment with the Frei Administration,' 10 Feb. 1968 in RG 84, Box 177, American Embassy, Santiago, 'National Labor Unions' folder. For an analysis of the loss of support among urban groups in the 1967 elections, see Kaufman, *Politics of Land Reform in Chile*, pp. 123–5.

'more of a person and more realised in his human capacities'.⁶⁴ By 1967 Frei had begun to be concerned about the fulfilment of his dreams of a 'dynamic national and popular society'. Congressional opponents were trying to provoke the failure of his government, in his view, while others were actively promoting 'subversion'. Talk of a 'revolution' had begun to backfire. Frei claimed that he had never promised a 'revolution in six years'. He acknowledged the difficulty of achieving democratically in such a short time the social transformations that even violent and totalitarian regimes could not accomplish quickly.⁶⁵ Agrarian reform, Frei argued, was 'advancing without precipitation that would compromise its fortunes, but also without fear of its critics'. Frei praised the maturity and responsibility shown by the *campesinos*, yet he also feared those 'enemies of agrarian reform' who 'agitate the countryside to hinder it or take it to impossible extremes'.⁶⁶ In any case, it was already clear by 1967 that the Frei administration would not be able to reach its 1964 goal of 100,000 new landowners by 1970, 'because of financial and technical stringencies'.⁶⁷ Frei, for his part, began to focus more on the 'need for commercialising and modernizing Chilean agriculture than on redistribution of land'. He praised Chilean landowners who were open to technological advances and were making productive use of their land.⁶⁸ Frei also amended his goal of eradicating illiteracy. He now hoped that illiteracy could be reduced from the 16 per cent noted in the 1960 census to seven per cent by the end of his term in 1970.⁶⁹

Freire later recalled that he 'witnessed, sometimes with surprise, retreats in the area of political ideology by persons who had proclaimed their option for the transformation of society, then became frightened and repentant, and made a fearful about-face in mid-course and turned into hidebound reactionaries'.⁷⁰ Others, he said, perhaps thinking of his friend Chonchol, advanced 'by walking consistently, refusing to run from history'.⁷¹ In general terms, although trying to steer clear of any involvement in partisan disputes in a country not his own, Freire undoubtedly had more in common with those in the party who backed the so-called Chonchol Report, which argued that the poor showing in the elections of 1967 indicated the need for a deepening of the process of social transformation and that Chile needed to adopt a 'non-capitalist' road to development. This report was highly

⁶⁴ Frei, 'Mensaje 1967,' p. 342.

⁶⁵ Frei, 'Mensaje 1967,' pp. 72–4.

⁶⁶ Frei, 'Mensaje 1968,' pp. 32–4.

⁶⁷ Sidney Weintraub, 'Land Use/Land Reforms,' 9 May 1967, in RG 84, Box 173, American Embassy, Santiago.

⁶⁸ J. Norbury, 'Telegram, 17 July 1967,' in RG 84, Box 175, US Embassy, Santiago, 'Political Affairs and Relations' folder, NA.

⁶⁹ Frei, 'Mensaje 1967,' p. 50.

⁷⁰ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, p. 38.

⁷¹ Freire, *Pedagogy of Hope*, p. 38.

controversial within the party itself and revealed increasing divisions within the party. By early 1968, there were indications that some within the Christian Democratic party, including the presumed presidential candidate in the 1970 elections Radomiro Tomic, were interested in forming an alliance with parties to their left including the Communist Party. Frei himself, not surprisingly, was opposed to this idea.⁷²

An important, if not large, faction within the Christian Democrats which was pressing for more ‘revolutionary’ change was the youth organisation, Juventud Demócrata Cristiana. Since 1963, the JDC had been one of the factions most critical of capitalism and individualism. They had argued that a Christian Democratic government would represent the Chilean poor and create an ‘authentically human society’. By the second half of the Frei administration, members of the JDC were engaged in such activities as encouraging land invasions. In November 1968, they enthusiastically supported the idea of creating a ‘popular force capable of constructing socialism’. US ambassador Edward Korry saw them as viewing Chile ‘through a Marxist optic with revolutionary Christian overtones’. The Christian Democratic party, from this perspective and from that of Chonchol (with whom the youth were aligned), needed to rid itself of more conservative figures like Interior Minister Edmundo Pérez Zúkovic. Although elder statesmen in the party disagreed with the younger Christian Democrats’ methods and diagnosis, they did not want to lose what they considered the ‘most vital elements’ of the party.⁷³

Many of those involved in literacy training programmes and other who worked in the countryside had themselves had their own consciousness transformed, as Freire had presumed would take place. ‘Their idealism and close contact with the people have not rendered them charitable towards the government’s efforts,’ one US embassy official noted. ‘Nor do they excuse the PDC’s quashing of the revolutionaries’ assaults.’ Those Christian Democrats active in the countryside complained that ‘the present bureaucracy does not understand the importance of a grass-roots movement.

⁷² The US ambassador argued that by not openly rejecting such an alliance, while maintaining good relations with Tomic, the USA would subtly direct the Communist Party toward a rejection of the alliance. See Korry’s 30 April 1968 telegram in RG 84, Box 179, American Embassy, Santiago, ‘Political Parties’ folder, NA. See Stallings’s class analysis of the divisions in the governing party in *Class Conflict and Economic Development*, pp. 62, 108–15, and 229–30.

⁷³ Korry, ‘The JDC: Both Seen and Heard,’ 9 Nov. 1968 telegram in RG 84, Box 179, American Embassy, Santiago, ‘Political Parties – PDC Youth’ folder. To understand the JDC’s perspective prior to the Frei’s inauguration, see ‘Segundo Congreso Nacional de la Juventud Demócrata Cristiana – Informe’ (Santiago: Oct./Nov. 1963), particularly pp. 5, 7, 10, 11, and 13. Regarding Chonchol’s appeal to youth, see Roxborough, O’Brien and Roddick, *Chile, The State and Revolution*, p. 66.

According to their liturgy, little time remains to effect a non-violent revolution and by its “lack of faith in the Chilean people” it is letting the opportunity pass. They see an embryonic revolution in the *campo*, with the *campesinos* being politicised to the left. In their view it should not be taken for granted that these people – “their people” – will lock step with the PDC. Indeed, unless the PDC-cum-government unleashes an ideological movement, FRAP [the left alliance], by their reasoning, would be the major beneficiary.’

A State Department official argued that while these young people remained highly motivated, they were also increasingly frustrated with the pace of change, and the general slackening of interest in the revolutionary aspects of the Frei programme.⁷⁴

We have more direct evidence regarding Freire’s impact on the consciousness of his younger colleagues than of that which he may have had on the *campesinos*. Freire had argued that professionals engaged in the work of social transformation needed to reflect constantly on what they were doing, and to see themselves historically, as well, as the *campesinos* were being encouraged to do. Through dialogue and solidarity with the *campesinos*, they were themselves to be transformed.⁷⁵ As one of Freire’s students and colleagues, Rolando Pinto, recalled in a 1991 interview, ‘Paulo Freire produced an enormous impression on those of us who were young college students’. Freire’s ideas were accepted immediately by students who saw themselves as progressive or revolutionary. ‘We thought that we had found in his philosophy one of the paths for the liberation of the oppressed classes.’ ‘In communication with our people’, Pinto argued, ‘we were reborn as organic educators of the people’. By the end of 1967 or early 1968, according to some of Freire’s young colleagues like Marcela Gajardo, there was a process of radicalisation that had begun within the Christian Democratic party, particularly among the younger members who, at the same time, contended that Frei’s ‘Revolution in Liberty’ had taken a turn to the right. Freire ‘defended the whole process of structural transformation, inspired not by Marxist ideology, but using Marxist categories of analysis of reality’.⁷⁶ Pinto and others argued that the utopianism of the presidential campaign and the early years of the Frei administration lasted until the middle of 1967. Young critics of Frei argued that change was now no longer under the administration’s control; popular forces were now taking charge, leaving

⁷⁴ See Robert Dean 23 Jan. 1967 report, ‘The PDC: A Party in Search of a Role,’ p. 8 in RG 84, Box 176, American Embassy, Santiago, NA.

⁷⁵ Paulo Freire, ‘El compromiso del profesional con la sociedad’ (Santiago 1968), pp. 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11 and 13.

⁷⁶ Silva Trivinos and Andreola, ‘Opressão para esperança,’ pp. 5–6 and 194.

the reformists to try and find a way somehow to halt the forward momentum.⁷⁷

Consciousness raising: conflict and retreat

In the second half of Frei's tenure in office, there was a move away from 'promotional action' in INDAP, and consciousness raising was no longer one of the ministry of education's tasks. CORA, for its part, some complained, was no longer 'studying the reality of the countryside'. Some Brazilians who had been working with the Frei administration from the beginning now felt uncomfortable, as more conservative members of the Christian Democratic party viewed them more suspiciously.⁷⁸ Fortunately for Freire himself, new opportunities presented themselves at the Instituto de Capacitación e Investigación (ICIRA), an arm of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Although ICIRA was a joint operation with the Chilean government and Freire continued to work with Chilean government agencies, his involvement with FAO gave him a degree of independence and more time to reflect on and write about what he and his associates were doing. He worked for ICIRA from January 1968 to April 1969. Many of those who had worked with him in other organisations joined him there. Much of the remainder of his time in Chile would be spent putting more of his ideas on paper. Stung by criticisms from within the Frei administration and the Christian Democratic party generally, Freire tried to make clear that he had never felt himself to be an 'educator' of Chile but that he had tried to establish a dialogue with Chileans (as, indeed, his whole theory of education was based on dialogue).⁷⁹

By late 1968, at least, the Frei administration had begun to modify its policies. It began to take strong measures against *campesinos* who staged land invasions and asked the government to expropriate the land. INDAP officials in Nuble province, in particular, were accused of encouraging such actions. Interior Minister Pérez Zúkovic sent in 500 *carabineros* to remove *campesinos* from the land.⁸⁰ Generally, Pérez Zúkovic promised to 'maintain order in the countryside'.⁸¹ One of Freire's closest Chilean

⁷⁷ Silva Trivinos and Andreola, 'Opressão para esperança,' pp. 34–5. See also Williamson, *Paulo Freire*, p. 42.

⁷⁸ Rolando Pinto has argued that the Brazilians were viewed unsympathetically from the beginning by some members of the Christian Democratic party. See Silva Trivinos and Andreola, 'Opressão para esperança,' pp. 38–40.

⁷⁹ Silva Trivinos and Andreola, 'Opressão para esperança,' pp. 196–8 and 203.

⁸⁰ 'The Moneda, the PDC, and a Man Called Tomic,' and 'Zukovic Heard From: Telegram 23 Oct. 1968,' both in RG 84, Box 179, American Embassy, Santiago, 'PDC Folder No. 2,' NA.

⁸¹ Korry, 'Politics of Drought' Telegram, 9 Sept. 1968 in RG 84, Box 179, American Embassy, Santiago, 'Social Conditions' Folder.

associates, Marcela Gajardo, argued that something fundamental was at stake at this point. 'The masses demanded more participation in the process of reform' that Chile was undergoing. 'The government refused, and parts of the population took extreme attitudes' and 'were suffocated by the authorities'.⁸²

INDAP official Chonchol, who had been expected to resign earlier in the year, finally left the government on 11 November 1968.⁸³ He refrained from criticising Frei himself and sought publicly to maintain party unity, even though his own preference would have been to have those on the right of the Christian Democratic political spectrum leave the party. Chonchol was among those who supported the uniting of 'popular forces', with or without the support of the leadership of the Marxist parties.⁸⁴

It is important to keep in mind not only the politics of the Christian Democratic administration with which Freire had been associated but also the larger social and political context. The impetus the government had provided peasants and urban workers to organise had clearly borne fruit. By 1968 Frei took credit for the growth of unions and the greater use of petitions and collective bargaining.⁸⁵ Generally, Frei saw (or claimed to see) that Chilean society was entering an 'era of dialogue, respect, and participation'.⁸⁶ The unions had been expected, in their own ways, to educate and even civilise the *campesinos*, and make them into citizens.⁸⁷ By the end of his administration, union membership had almost doubled from 270,542 members in 1964 to 533,713 in 1969. Alexander has argued that under Frei 'the peasants increasingly spoke for themselves as citizens, and not for their employers as agents of their employers, as in the past'. The number of strikes also almost doubled between 1964 to 1968 (476 to 901), although it declined after that (to only 771 in 1969). A full eighteen per cent of the Chilean population now belonged to unions. The growth in organisation among the rural population was particularly impressive, with 1,658 belonging to some form of union or collective in 1964 and 104,666 rural union members by 1969, 'surpassing', as Frei himself noted, 'the most optimistic expectations'. By 1970, 'roughly half of the entire rural labour force' belonged to a union.⁸⁸ As Tinsman has argued, 'Unions became the single

⁸² Silva Trivinos and Andreola, 'Opressão para esperança,' pp. 185–6.

⁸³ 'Frei's Compromise – Hobson's Choice?' pp. 2 and 3, in RG 84, Box 179, American Embassy, Santiago, 'Political Parties' folder; Dean, 'President Up and Chonchol Out,' and T. Friedman, 'Chonchol: Game and Set to Frei,' in RG 84, Box 179, American Embassy, Santiago, 'PDC Folder No. 2,' NA; RG 84, Box 179.

⁸⁴ Korry, 'Chonchol' Telegram, 2 Dec. 1968 in RG 84, Box 179, American Embassy, Santiago, 'PDC Folder No. 2.'

⁸⁵ Frei, 'Mensaje 1968,' p. 417.

⁸⁶ Frei, 'Mensaje 1969,' p. 92.

⁸⁷ Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict*, p. 85.

⁸⁸ Frei, 'Mensaje 1970,' pp. 4, 9, 31 and 35. See also Alexander, *Tragedy of Chile*, pp. 92–3.

most important conduit connecting the rural poor to what became the Agrarian Reform process. They fostered a new sense of citizenship among a historically disenfranchised population and nurtured *campesinos'* confidence that poor people were taken seriously by the state and political parties.⁸⁹ But as Chilean social scientist Eduardo Hamuy contended, 'Inert masses', once 'pushed and placed in movement', naturally 'sharpened conflicts' and also created a crisis in the legitimacy of the representative system. At the same time, the Frei administrations' initiatives in the countryside were losing support among urban Chileans.⁹⁰

Ethnographic studies conducted late in the Frei years suggested that new forms of consciousness were developing, if not necessarily the ones that Christian Democratic leaders claimed that they sought. Peasants continued to be cynical about politicians yet aware of their own increasing dependence on them. Where previously their ties had been limited largely to the landowner himself, as David Lehmann has argued, 'the growing incapacity of the patrons ... to live up to their [traditional] obligations ... [set] the scene for the rise of opposition consciousness', largely because of the actions of the government itself in promoting land reform and rural unionisation. The Frei administration's reforms clearly led to increased conflict in the countryside between organised peasants in opposition to landowners. 'Opposition consciousness', in Lehmann's terms, however, should not be confused with a peasant's growing sense of himself or herself as an independent political actor; the unions themselves provided whatever degree of newfound political strength the peasants had. Meanwhile, even if peasants now felt more integrated into Chile's social and economic system, the political reality was that peasants now had to court the patronage of powerful politicians. Partisan rivalries in the new unions in turn weakened larger class solidarities.⁹¹

The Frei government had, on a fundamental level, tried to make significant changes and, in the process, attacked the interests of 'privileged groups' in Chilean society. Chile's conservative political forces deeply resented Frei himself and the Christian Democratic party generally.⁹² Since rightist candidates had received only one-eighth of the vote in 1965, the Christian

⁸⁹ Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict*, p. 83.

⁹⁰ Eduardo Hamuy B., 'Chile: el proceso de democratización fundamental,' in *Cuadernos del Centro de Estudios Socioeconómicos* (Santiago, 1967), pp. 24–5, 27 and 29–30. Regarding the increasing loss of support in the cities, see Kaufman, *Politics of Land Reform in Chile*, pp. 41, 223–6 and 235–55.

⁹¹ Lehmann, 'Peasant Consciousness and Agrarian Reform in Chile,' pp. 306 and 309–24.

⁹² Sidney Weintraub, 'Some Reflections on the Senate's Rejection of President Frei's Proposed Trip to the United States,' pp. 2, 6 and 9, 11 Feb. 1967, in RG 84, Box 175, US Embassy Chile, NA.

Democrats had felt that the right no longer needed to be taken into consideration.⁹³ The Chilean right, including former president Alessandri, was concerned that Chile had become an 'over-politicised nation accelerating its plunge towards chaos, ruin, and inevitable military intervention'.⁹⁴ The conservative daily newspaper *El Mercurio* had criticised the attempts to 'organize the discontented without a controlling mechanism'.⁹⁵ In any case, not only were the rural and urban poor organising but also the employers.⁹⁶ These new developments clearly generated conflict in the countryside and within society at large. There were 368 land seizures in 1970.⁹⁷ Eight squatters had been killed in March 1969, in an action for which the Interior Secretary bore some responsibility. Many young Christian Democrats, as well as Chonchol, then broke with the party and formed the Movement for Popular Unity, MAPU, in May. Pérez Zúkovic himself was assassinated by members of a far left group in June 1969. A Frei administration agrarian reform official was murdered in 1970 by an angry landowner.⁹⁸

The changing political climate was one of the reasons that by April 1969, it was time for Freire to move on. Criticisms from the right were partly responsible. The Frei administration attempt to distance itself from Freire is illustrated by the fact that between the first draft of Cortés's report on the literacy campaign published in the *Revista de Educación* in June 1968 and the final version issued in May 1969, Freire's name disappeared. Invitations from abroad were also attractive, and the purely Latin American phase of Freire's life was now over. Cortés himself left for Mexico City in the same year to work for UNESCO in an adult education programme called the *Centro de Cooperación Regional para la Educación de Adultos en América Latina y el Caribe* (CREFAL).⁹⁹

The international context which had helped make the Frei administration reforms possible was changing as well. Some observers on the left were convinced that the new Chilean ambassador, Edward Korry, was not as committed to the administration as the previous ambassador, Ralph Dungan, had been.¹⁰⁰ As US presidential candidate in 1968, Richard Nixon called for a return to the Truman/Eisenhower Latin America policies of 'trade instead

⁹³ Simon Collier and William F. Sater, *A History of Chile, 1808–1994* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 310.

⁹⁴ See the 21 Dec. 1967 report by Korry in RG 84, Box 176.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Robert Dean, 'GOC Gives Up Plan to Legislate on Promoción Popular,' 10 June 1967 in RG 84, Box 176, American Embassy Santiago, NA.

⁹⁶ Angell, 'Chile since 1958,' p. 153.

⁹⁷ Angell, 'Chile since 1958,' p. 155.

⁹⁸ Collier and Sater, *History of Chile*, pp. 314 and 325.

⁹⁹ See *Educación de Adultos*, particularly pp. 66–7.

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Norbury, 14 Jan. 1968, memorandum which quotes the Communist newspaper *El Siglo* in RG 84, Box 175, American Embassy, Santiago, 'Political Affairs and Relations, POL 2 Country Situation Report.'

of aid.¹⁰¹ During a visit to Chile in the year prior to his election, Nixon ‘seemed to have developed an intense dislike for the Christian Democratic Party’.¹⁰² The commitment to the Alliance for Progress was declining. ‘[P]roposed slashes in the Alliance are so large’, one US official complained, ‘as to call into question the entire United States commitment in this hemisphere.’ The problems Chile was confronting, including not only decline in foreign aid but also the aforementioned drought, it was feared, could have an impact on the 1970 elections.¹⁰³

Conclusion

Any assessment of Frei’s reforms must take into account the inevitable fact that there were winners and losers during the Frei years. Under Frei, real wages in the countryside improved by 40 per cent, a much higher rate than for other sectors in the economy.¹⁰⁴ Although agrarian reform had been somewhat ‘diluted’ by the Chilean Congress and the pace had been much slower than Frei anticipated, the Frei government expropriated ‘about 12 per cent of all irrigated land’, with 20,000 families on *asentamientos* and 2,000 families getting land outright.¹⁰⁵ Naturally enough, only a ‘privileged minority’, most obviously the *asentados* themselves, benefited from agrarian reform process itself, leaving a majority unaffected. Some government officials were concerned that a new oligarchy was being created that was not tied to the union movement but to organisations that represented the traditional landowners. Surprisingly perhaps, while Christian Democrats dominated the new peasant organisations, they did not ‘gain a corresponding proportion of the rural vote in the 1970 presidential elections’. While the *asentados* were themselves often depoliticised devotees of the official line, in general terms, the rest of the rural population was less loyal to the party than it had once been to the landed elite.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ Richard M. Nixon, ‘For a Productive Alliance, 15 Oct. 1968,’ p. 4, available in RG 84, Box 177, American Embassy, Santiago, ‘Aid (Gen).’

¹⁰² Paul E. Sigmund, *The United States and Democracy in Chile* (Baltimore, 1993), p. 34.

¹⁰³ See, for example, FRUS, 1967–1968, vol. 9, ‘International Developments and Economic Defense Policy,’ ‘Letter from the Administrator of the Agency for International Development (Gaud) to the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, 25 Nov. 1968,’ pp. 232–4.

¹⁰⁴ Angell, ‘Chile since 1958,’ p. 150. Stallings notes that white-collar workers benefitted most from Frei policies, although the ‘bourgeoisie ... did not lose all that much’. Stallings, *Class Conflict and Economic Development*, p. 57. See also Kaufman, *Politics of Land Reform in Chile*, pp. 126–8.

¹⁰⁵ Angell, ‘Chile since 1958,’ pp. 152–3.

¹⁰⁶ Tinsman, *Partners in Conflict*, p. 206; Lehmann, ‘Peasant Consciousness,’ p. 318; Thome, ‘Law, Conflict, and Change,’ pp. 200–1; Kaufman, *Politics of Land Reform in Chile*, p. 131; Ferreira, *Tendencias del poder*, pp. 25, 31 and 33.

In his final presidential message, Frei dwelt at some length on the accomplishments of his administration in the area of adult literacy training, drawing heavily on the report written by Cortés and, again, choosing to ignore the central role played by Freire himself (even when he explicitly described the Brazilian's methods). Government statistics indicated that illiteracy had declined significantly from 16.4 per cent in 1964 to 11 per cent by 1969, with expectations that it would decline to nine per cent in the following year. In some rural areas, literacy rates more than doubled. Obviously, illiteracy had not been eradicated, although a CORA report suggested that it had been eliminated in most of the *asentamientos* themselves, suggesting again the marked differences between winners and losers during these years. Nevertheless, perhaps in any other era other than the impatient 1960s, the five per cent increase in the percentage of the population that could read and write during the Frei years would have been recognised as a major accomplishment. It should be noted, in this respect, that UNESCO considered Chile's education programme to be among the five best in the world.¹⁰⁷ Cortés himself clearly recognised that the momentum that he and Freire and others had generated needed to be sustained, no matter who succeeded Frei.¹⁰⁸

Chonchol, for his part, contended that the overall programme of social transformation had not gone far enough. While other observers at the time thought that the growth of the union movement should put an end to the image of the Chilean campesino as passive, Chonchol argued that the consciousness of those involved in the rural organisations was limited. The *campesinos* were still not aware of the potential power they had. The organisational structures and functions were still 'excessively informal' and there was little connection between the various organisations. Some of the new organisations in the countryside included *latifundistas* as well as *campesinos*. The union leaders still knew too little about the 'social and economic reality of the country', although their aspirations and abilities were both improving. 'The *campesinos* still lacked confidence in themselves and in their ability to acquire what would benefit them', and were too fearful of change. This feeling of inferiority manifested itself in particular in relation to their former employers; the legacies of a paternalistic social system and habits of 'passive acceptance of traditional domination and dependency' could not be overcome overnight. Generally, critics argued, the *campesinos* were still relatively marginalised. In some cases, those who had received land under the land reform had become 'new aristocrats', generating new

¹⁰⁷ Frei, 'Mensaje 1970,' pp. 29–31 and 54. Note how Chonchol in 1965 suggested that the problems of the peasantry had to be resolved in 'at most five to ten years'. See *Desarrollo de América Latina*, p. 74. See also *Educación de adultos*, p. 21.

¹⁰⁸ *Educación de adultos*, p. 10; Williamson, *Paulo Freire*, p. 76.

tensions in the countryside. The ‘most dynamic elements’ ended up migrating to the city. Nevertheless, to some extent, new ‘aspirations had been created.’¹⁰⁹

By 1970 the Christians Democrats had accomplished much, but they had also alienated many of their former supporters. The 1970 election was disappointing for a party which had enjoyed increasing success since its founding, but it did not provide a mandate for anyone. The party’s presidential candidate Radomiro Tomic, running on a platform promising more social transformation, won the support of only slightly less than 28 per cent of the voters. While the Marxist-dominated Popular Unity coalition won, it received only 40,000 votes more than the conservatives who united behind the new National party (and old) candidate Jorge Alessandri. The left received a smaller percentage of the total than it had earned when it lost in 1964. Chonchol, for a time, would be Allende’s minister of agriculture, overseeing the fulfilment of his hopes for a ‘massive, rapid and drastic’ land reform.¹¹⁰

The ‘Revolution in Liberty’ represented an unusually dynamic, if problematic, period in Chilean, and more broadly, Latin American history. In almost any other South American country during the Cold War era, the degree of social change and political polarisation that took place during the Frei years would have resulted in a military coup.¹¹¹ As I have demonstrated, the Christian Democratic dream of social transformation undoubtedly had its contradictory elements, not least of all in the Frei administration’s sometimes inconsistent attempt to encourage people in the countryside to form unions. Freire’s own vision for literacy training and popular education had profound ramifications for personal and collective change, yet its critique of *campesino* consciousness had its own limitations, as well. *Campesinos’* consciousness was not merely magical; it was, in its own ways, critical. The *campesinos’* critique of social relations is exemplified by their tale of the hermaphroditic *patrón* who sold his soul to the devil. That critique was a product of history. If it reflected a ‘false consciousness’, the Chilean popular classes’ mentalities also had their own strengths, as in Cortés’s story of the fishermen who resisted the temptation to exhaust the local supply of fish. Moreover, while many in the Frei administration hoped that education

¹⁰⁹ Chonchol, *Reforma agraria como proceso dinámico*, pp. 16–19. Chonchol, ‘Poder y reforma agraria en la experiencia chilena,’ in *Chile Hoy* Third Edition (Santiago, 1971), pp. 255–321, particularly 269, 272, and 310–13. Almino Affonso, Sergio Gómez, Emilio Klein and Pablo Ramirez, *Movimiento campesino chileno* (Santiago, 1970), vol. 1, pp. 7 and 251.

¹¹⁰ Loveman, *Struggles in the Countryside*, pp. 280–301. For a summary of the UP agrarian reform, see Thome, ‘Law, Conflict, and Change,’ pp. 201–15.

¹¹¹ David Lehmana, ‘Political Incorporation versus Political Instability: The Case of the Chilean Agrarian Reform, 1965–70,’ *Journal of Development Studies*, 7 (July 1971), pp. 365–95.

would enable the peasants to produce more in an increasingly commercialised countryside, *campesinos* for their part hoped that education would make it possible for their children to be freed from the burdens of a life spent working in the fields. Their children would work in the cities and, it was hoped, in an office.¹¹² Literacy training would make possible the social mobility that peasants saw as an escape from rural restrictions. The true 'Revolution in Liberty' would involve the free choice of so many to join the on-going migration to the cities that was transforming Latin America as a whole.

¹¹² 'Círculo de Investigación Temática,' 20 Nov. 1968, discussion with women, pp. 7, 8 and 9; Paulo de Tarso Santos, 'Educación agrícola y desarrollo rural: versión preliminar,' Conferencia Mundial Sobre Enseñanza y Capacitación Agrícola, Copenhagen, 1970, p. 21.